

## Message Text

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53

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 /049 W

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R 131044Z SEP 76

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1419

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDON DERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 318

E.O. 11652: /A

TAGS: PINT, UK, EI

SUBJECT: REACTION TO NEW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

1. NEWS SEPT 11 THAT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND MERLYN REES WAS PROMOTED TO HOME SECRETARY AND REPLACED AS SECSTATE NORTHERN IRELAND BY DEFENSE SECRETARY ROY MASON WAS MET ALONG PARTISAN LINES IN ULSTER. MOST LOYALISTS CAUTIOUSLY WELCOMED THE MOVES IN THE HOPE THAT MASON WOULD TAKE A TOUGHER LINE ON SECURITY THAN HIS PREDECESSOR. GERRY FITT, LEADER OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP), HAD "STRONG OBJECTIONS" TO THE APPOINTMENT OF MR. MASON. MR. FITT EXPRESSED HIS CONVICTION THAT MR. MASON WOULD DO NOTHING TO HELP POLITICAL PROGRESS AND RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE COMMUNITIES. CONGEN BELIEVES FITT INITIALLY EXPRESSING PERSONAL VIEW RATHER THAN PARTY CONSENSUS. SDLP WOULD HAVE PREFERRED ROY HATTERSLEY BUT MANY IN PARTY, INCLUDING PADDY DEVLIN, WELCOME ANY CHANGE FROM MERLYN REES. MINORITY COMMUNITY IN GENERAL SOMEWHAT DISTRUSTFUL OF MR. MASON'S CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH MILITARY.

2. IAN PAISLEY OPENLY REJOICED SAYING REES DEPARTURE WAS BEST NEWS IN TWO YEARS FOR PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND. MORE COMMON WAS GENERAL SYMPATHY FOR A DECENT MAN WHO HAD DONE HIS BEST IN UNCLASSIFIED

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THE CIRCUMSTANCES. VANGUARD, ALLIANCE AND NORTHERN IRELAND

LABOUR PARTIES PAID TRIBUTE TO REES' CONCERN FOR PEOPLE OF  
NORTHERN IRELAND HIS INSISTENCE THAT ULSTER PEOPLE ALONE COULD  
FIND POLITICAL SOLUTION AND HIS FIRMNESS ON PARTNERSHIP. ALTHOUGH  
IT NOT YET WIDELY RECOGNIZED, REES HAS ALSO DONE MUCH IN PAST  
TWO YEARS TO DISPEL CONCERN THAT BRITISH INTENDED TO PULL OUT OF  
NORTHERN IRELAND, MILITARILY AT LEAST.  
SPICER

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
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